

Colorado's Youth Policy Statement for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Background

In coordination with Colorado's Unified Plan for Workforce Investment (to be submitted on April 1st, 2000 to the U.S. Department of Labor), and the State Workforce Investment Plan for Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and the Wagner-Peyser Act (to be submitted on April 1st, 2000), Colorado plans to coordinate youth activities funded under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act with other youth focused agencies. These agencies include Job Corps agencies, local housing authorities, adult and local education agencies, juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies, rehabilitation agencies, county social services offices, community-based organizations, and local businesses. The collaboration with these agencies will help with the non-duplication of services and promote the most effective and efficient delivery of services to youth.

In compliance of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), with the guidance of local elected officials, will establish Youth Councils as a subgroup within each local board. Each Youth Council will be encouraged to focus on youth planning, oversight, and policy that prepare youth to enter the workforce or to advance to post-secondary education or other occupational skills training. Youth Councils will provide the necessary development and oversight of youth programs within each region.

Each Youth Council will be appointed within 60 days of the chartering of the Local Area's Workforce Investment Board. Youth Councils will work with their local WIB in developing parts of the local plan that pertain to youth. In working with their local boards, the Youth Council is responsible for ensuring that partnerships are developed with the various systems that serve youth, such as education, employment, community services, businesses, and juvenile justice to create a more efficient and comprehensive delivery system. The partnership between the local youth council and the private sector should promote linkages between academic and occupational learning and exposure to opportunities for career exploration and skill development.

Youth Eligibility

Under WIA, eligible youth are defined as low-income individuals between the ages of 14-21. Individuals who fall between 14-18 are considered Younger Youth, while individuals that fall between 19-21 are considered Older Youth. Under WIA, eligible youth can be characterized by one or more of the following: a high school dropout, homeless, deficient in basic literary skills, runaway or foster child, pregnant or parenting, an offender, and an individual who requires additional assistance to complete an education, or to secure and hold employment. Along these lines, youth can fall into eight targeted groups: individuals who are school dropouts, basic skills deficient, whose educational attainment is one or more grade levels below the grade level appropriate to the age of the individual, pregnant or parenting youth, individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities, homeless or runaway youth, offenders, or youth that face serious barriers to employment and identified by each local WIB. Five percent (5%) of the total participant population enrolled under Title I youth programs in each local area may be individuals who do not meet the minimum income criteria to be considered eligible youth if the individuals are in one of the aforementioned eight target groups. The WIA encourages that youths who

are served get a depth of service that makes a difference in their lives. It is the local WIBs decision to decide on number of youths served versus depth of service.

Roles and Responsibilities

Section 117 of the WIA outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Youth Council. As outlined in the Act, the Youth Council is responsible for:

- (A) developing the portions of the local plan relating to eligible youth, as determined by the chairperson of the local board;
- (B) recommending eligible providers of youth activities, to be awarded grants or contracts on a competitive basis by the local board to carry out the youth activities; and;
- (C) conducting oversight with respect to the eligible providers of youth activities, in the local area;
- (D) coordinating youth activities authorized under section 129 in the local area;
- (E) other duties determined to be appropriate by the chairperson of the local board.

Since the Youth Council members have expertise in youth issues, the local board at any time may delegate responsibilities to the Youth Council to take advantage of their expertise.

The local Youth Plan must be written and submitted by each local area's Youth Council, with assistance from individuals as deemed necessary by either the Youth Council or local WIB. The Youth Council will submit the local Youth Plan to the local WIB for approval.

Membership Requirements

The WIA states that the membership of each youth council—

- (A) shall include
 - (i) members of the local board with special interest or expertise in youth policy;
 - (ii) representatives of youth service agencies, including juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies;
 - (iii) representatives of local public housing authorities;
 - (iv) parents of eligible youth seeking assistance under this subtitle;
 - (v) individuals, including former participants, and representatives of organizations, that have experience relating to youth activities; and
 - (vi) representatives of Job Corps; and
- (B) may include such other individuals as the chairperson of the local board, in cooperation with the chief elected official, determines to be appropriate.

Colorado will require each youth council to fill at least two slots with business members. The local WIB is required to recruit and actively engage WIB and community business members to be part of the Youth Council, particularly those business members with strong relationships with local schools. These business members would fit under category (i) of the aforementioned membership requirements. Each local board is also strongly encouraged to fill at least two slots with individuals from secondary and postsecondary education institutions. These members would fit under (i), "members of the local board",

(ii), “representatives of youth service agencies”, and (v), “representatives of organizations, that have experience relating to youth activities”.

Youth Councils are required to bring in the appropriate personnel to sit on the Youth Council. Appropriate means high level, high profile members of the community, as well as a membership that reflects the makeup of the general population.

Local WIBs need to fill all slots with the essential persons. If, after all resources have been exhausted, a slot cannot be filled, an official letter will need to be written to the State Workforce Office detailing the reasons the slot cannot be filled. Once the membership slots of the Youth Council are filled, the state will review Youth Council membership as part of its certification of local WIBs.

Youth Council members are required to meet the same conflict of interest standards as regular WIB members. This is essential because Youth Council members have a role in recommending programs and funding, as well as participate in discussions and influence decisions.

The size of the Youth Council does matter. A membership balance needs to be achieved that ensures all the key organizations are on-board while keeping the group at a manageable size so that active participation is encouraged.

Sample Youth Council Membership

Mandated Categories	Suggested Representation
Members of the local board with special interest or expertise in youth policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Apprenticeship Council Member- Secondary Education- Postsecondary Education- Secondary Special Education- STC Partnership- WIB Business Representative
Representatives of youth service agencies, including juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Juvenile Justice- Vocational Rehabilitation- Health Services- Mental Health- Community College
Representatives of local public housing authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local Public Housing
Parents of eligible youth seeking assistance under this subtitle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Parent(s)
Individuals, including former participants, and representatives of organizations, that have experience relating to youth activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participants (former JTPA)- STC local/regional coordinator- Existing youth agency or interagency planning groups
Business Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local business members interested in youth
Job Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Job Corps
May include such other individuals as the chairperson of the local board, in representatives of youth service agencies, including juvenile justice and local law enforcement agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Chamber of Commerce- Civic Organization- Workforce Center Director- Adult Education- Social Services – Youth Program- Social Services/TANF

Colorado Academic Performance Measures

Colorado, through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, will make a priority to strengthen the connection between academic excellence and success in the workplace.

The Colorado State Board of Education has adopted new academic content standards for Colorado youth. Standards define what students should know and be able to do at certain threshold points in their schooling -- at fourth grade, at eighth grade and as they approach graduation from high school -- in order to be considered proficient in reading, writing, science, math, geography, history, civics, music, art, physical education and foreign language. Local boards are encouraged to develop programs that assist youth in meeting the state's academic content standards.

The Colorado student assessment program (CSAP) is a tool intended to provide a picture of student performance at the state, district, and school levels for educators, policymakers and the public. CSAP is an assessment that uses multiple measures to determine student performance in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Currently the reading assessments are administered in 3rd, 4th, and 7th grades; writing assessments in 4th and 7th grades; and mathematics assessment in 5th grade. The CSAP will identify the extent to which students have achieved the state's academic standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and science.

Beginning in the spring of 2001, the CSAP will be administered annually to all public high school students in the 10th grade. The CSAP will identify the extent to which students have achieved the state academic standards in reading, writing, and mathematics. A local workforce investment board and its Youth Council may elect to use the results of the 10th grade CSAP to measure the academic achievement of WIA-in school youth. Local areas may run into problems accessing individual CSAP scores. Local WIBs and Youth Councils are encouraged to collaborate with local school officials and parents to develop a process to provide access to CSAP scores.

The local workforce investment board and its Youth Council are encouraged to access assessment tools other than CSAP, if other assessments would assist in need identification and in plan development for eligible youth. In addition to the CSAP, many academic and career assessments are available through the school system and through other agencies that serve at risk youth. These assessments can assist the Youth Program in developing successful academic and or vocational plans for eligible youth.

Youth Councils must adopt policies regarding how educational attainment will be measured for WIA eligible youth who are not enrolled in a secondary school. Currently, the State of Colorado does not require all Title II funded adult education programs to meet established Adult Basic and Literacy Education Program Performance Standards. Local workforce investment boards and the Youth Councils are encouraged to form partnerships between out-of-school youth providers and adult educators to allow access to assessment services, assessment training, and data collection services.

Youth Performance Measures

Local Youth Councils, in collaboration with the local WIB, will be responsible for meeting the specific performance standards negotiated by the USDOL. The local WIBs and their Youth Councils will award contracts to local youth services providers based on the extent to which they provide services to

youth to meet the USDOL negotiated performance standards and the state performance standards for Title I of the Carl Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.

The WIA has identified core performance standards for youth served under Title I funding. These core standards for youth are:

14-18 Younger Youth

- (I) attainment of basic skills and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills;
- (II) attainment of secondary school diplomas (or) their recognized equivalents; and
- (III) placement and retention on postsecondary education or advanced training, or placement and retention in military service, employment, or qualified apprenticeships.

19-21 Older Youth

- (I) entry into unsubsidized employment;
- (II) retention in unsubsidized employment 6 months after entry into the employment;
- (III) earnings received in unsubsidized employment 6 months after entry into the employment; and
- (IV) attainment of a recognized credential relating to achievement of educational skills, which may include attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or occupational skills, by participants who enter unsubsidized employment, or by participants who are eligible youth at age 19 through 21 who enter postsecondary education, advanced training, or unsubsidized employment.

Colorado will have no additional performance measures for local WIBs during the first year. Additional performance standards from the State may be forthcoming after the first year of implementation.

The USDOL performance measures will be used to evaluate the local area's progress in meeting the guidelines of WIA Title I and eligible youth services. Local WIBs and Youth Councils should work with all local youth agencies and service providers to develop an applicable consensus of performance measures.

Customer Satisfaction

The WIA of 1998 and the Wagner-Peyser Act identify customer satisfaction survey information provided by youth program participants and parents as an important factor in the final grant award determination. In the local area's WIA Plan, local WIBs and Youth Councils are required to develop written policies and procedures for advertising, evaluating, and awarding contracts to ensure fairness and consistency and will take into account customer satisfaction results in awarding contracts.

Youth Program Criteria, Design and Elements

Colorado's Local Youth Councils, along with the WIBs, are responsible for ensuring that services to Title I eligible youth are comprehensive and that services are coordinated among all state and local agencies offering youth programs. In section 129 of the WIA, required youth program design, program elements, and additional requirements are outlined and required of local areas. The local elements and requirements for youth programs require that the following be available to all eligible youth that enter the program within the local area:

Criteria

The following criteria will be used in Colorado when developing the local youth program design. These criteria match the past and current efforts in Colorado that support the effective transition for at-risk youth to self-sufficiency.

- **Preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities, in appropriate cases** – WIA youth programs and postsecondary education is critical to an effective transition for eligible youth. The 28 postsecondary colleges and universities in the state work collaboratively with secondary schools and service agencies, to provide support and resources for youth at-risk. The inclusion of these criteria in the local youth program gives Colorado the opportunity to enhance and improve existing partnerships and service strategies.
- **Strong linkages between academic and occupational learning** – In 1999, Colorado surveyed 8663 high school seniors to determine what motivates them to learn and stay in school. The results show that students are motivated when academics are hands on, relevant and include career connections. Students are more likely to go on to postsecondary education, declare a major and be optimistic about their future, when they have had career experiences (job shadowing, career and academic planning, mentorships, a job connected to a class, internships and/or a certification) as part of their secondary school experience. To this end, 142 school districts are training teachers in contextual learning and in connecting career development to academic content and standards. The inclusion of this criterion in the local youth program gives Colorado the opportunity to enhance and improve the connections between academic and occupational learning.
- **Preparation for unsubsidized employment opportunities, in appropriate cases** – Colorado enjoys a strong economy and low unemployment. Therefore, in many communities, securing employment is relatively easy for youth at-risk. Of greater concern is maintenance of long-term employment leading to self-sufficiency. Long-term employment requires a match between interests and abilities for an eligible youth. The local youth program design in Colorado must include service strategies that support career development and preparation. These include: understanding interests and abilities, having work place opportunities to determine the match between career interests and available employment, instruction on effective work habits and skills, and, job seeking skills. The inclusion of these criteria in the local youth program gives Colorado the opportunity to enhance and improve the long-term employment outcomes for eligible youth.
- **Effective connections to intermediaries with strong links to the job market and local and regional employers** – In Colorado communities, there are many entities that respond to workforce needs and have worked to support at-risk youth over the years. These include, chambers of commerce, school-to-career partnerships, local interagency teams, community support teams and others. Connecting with these organizations will enhance program outcomes, expand service options and leverage resources for eligible youth. Each local youth program will design strategies to connect meaningfully with these organizations.

Youth Program Design: There are three components to Colorado's Youth Program Design:

1. Assessment – A comprehensive view of the eligible youth's needs, interests and skills
2. Planning – An individual plan that addresses school completion and employment
3. Service Elements – A range of service options and strategies to meet the needs of eligible youth

1. Assessment

Provide an objective assessment of the academic levels, skills levels, and service needs of each participant: A comprehensive assessment for Colorado's eligible youth should include:

1. Basic skills/academic abilities to include:
 - academic levels
 - basic skill deficits
 - developmental needs
2. Occupational skills to include:
 - interests
 - career experiences
 - employability skills and proficiencies
 - developmental needs
3. Supportive services
 - Assessment of barriers to school completion and/or securing of employment (such as transportation, shelter, child care, health care etc.)

Colorado has a strong system of assessment and service provision for at-risk youth. Many communities have a system in place that supports sharing of information and elimination of duplication. Eligible youth may have been assessed in multiple systems. Every effort will be made to secure assessment results that reflect currency of functioning. For example, assessment results may be available through special education, vocational rehabilitation and juvenile justice assessments, school system career and academic assessments etc.

2. Planning

Develop service strategies for each participant that shall identify an employment goal, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate services for the participant: Colorado is committed to offering services and activities tailored to individual needs and based on assessment information. Services will be tied to the age, maturity and experience of each individual. The plan for each individual will be flexible and use resources in the most effective method possible.

A collaborative planning process will be coordinated with all service providers working with the eligible youth. A provider's planning process will be coordinated with those of other systems'. These other plans may include school district Career Academic Plans (CAP), special education Individual Education Programs (IEP), vocational rehabilitation Individual Plans for Employment (IPE), youth corrections

community transition and emancipation plans, and others. Delivery of services can be enhanced through linkages with other providers. Therefore, if another system is currently providing services to an eligible youth under that system's plan the providers plan shall take that into account and work collaboratively.

The planning process will include the following goal setting components:

- **Academic** – including school completion when appropriate with an emphasis on the connection between academics and occupations
- **Career development/preparation** – leading to unsubsidized employment and including postsecondary education when appropriate
- **Character education** – including development of workplace competencies
- **Service and resource options and coordination** – including connections with intermediaries with strong links to the job market.

3. Service Elements

The following service elements can be used to develop a local comprehensive design for Colorado youth programs. The need for these elements should be determined for each eligible youth, based on the assessment and planning process. Many effective service strategies currently exist in Colorado communities. Every effort will be made to connect with established services and programs in existence in the local community, prior to establishing new service strategies.

- **Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction, leading to completion of secondary school, including dropout prevention strategies:** Colorado has service strategies available at the secondary, postsecondary and community levels. These strategies are designed to assist youth with school completion and can be also be integrated into career development and occupational instruction.
- **Alternative secondary school services, as appropriate:** For some youth participants, a traditional learning environment is not the best fit. Almost every secondary school youth in Colorado has access to a variety of alternative options including; alternative schools, schools of choice, charter schools, and alternative youth facilities, and other appropriate schools. Local Youth Programs must make available alternatives to traditional school settings that lead to the completion of secondary education. These types of programs will be used to support school completion for eligible youth.
- **Summer employment opportunities that are directly linked to academic and occupational learning:** Summer employment opportunities are a main-stay in Colorado communities and include the Governor's Summer Job Hunt, JTPA summer programs, private sector summer internships, and programs in public and private schools and community organizations. Youth programs in Colorado should, as appropriate to individual situations, design or use summer employment opportunities that take academic learning and apply it to real-world situations. Summer experiences will assist eligible youth in school completion, career development, postsecondary education and/or securing employment.

- **As appropriate, paid and unpaid work experiences, including internships and job shadowing:** The process of determining a career is developmental in nature, and includes: awareness, exploration and preparation. Youth programs will provide youth with experiences that allow them to match their interests and abilities to the world-of-work as a critical link to securing employment. This component can be used as appropriate to assist Colorado Youth Program-eligible youth in developing the work habits and skills necessary to enter into eventual unsubsidized employment.
- **Occupational skills training, as appropriate:** Once an individual has developed a specific career goal, the level of occupational skills training should be based on their specific needs. Types of training available in Colorado currently include on-the-job training, apprenticeships, occupational training programs offered through industry, high schools, area vocational schools, community colleges, universities and private technical schools. When combined with other service strategies as needed, skills training becomes a valuable part of a youth's experience and helps him or her move forward into other educational opportunities and the workforce. Colorado Youth Programs will connect with skills training opportunities that are available in their community and will develop new strategies to meet the individual training needs as appropriate.
- **Leadership development opportunities, which may include community services and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors during non-school hours, as appropriate:** Individuals who are successful in employment exhibit effective work skills and are positive members of their community. The Colorado Workplace Competencies are designed to prepare youth for employment and postsecondary education. The 28 skills are categorized in 5 areas. Employers and educators have validated these across the state.
Communication Skills: Demonstrates the ability to receive and relay information clearly and effectively.
Organization Skills: Demonstrates the ability to work effectively and efficiently. Thinking Skills: Demonstrates the ability to use reasoning.
Worker Qualities: Demonstrates the characteristics of an effective worker.
Technology Skills: Demonstrates the ability to work with a variety of technologies and equipment.

The Colorado Workplace Competencies will be used to by Youth Programs to promote the development of effective work and education skills.

- **Supportive services:** Based on the assessment and planning process, barriers to employment and school completion may be found. Support services address basic needs that prevent participation and/or successful completion of the individual's program (such as entry into and retention of unsubsidized employment and/or the attainment of basic skills and high school completion). Colorado Youth Programs will consider the support service needs of individuals in the areas of food, shelter, transportation, health care, childcare, etc. Provision of these services will be coordinated with local workforce partners and the many Colorado agencies and organizations that have the resources and service strategies available to meet these needs.

- **Adult mentoring for the period of participation and a subsequent period, for a total of not less than 12 months, which may include intergenerational programs which use older individuals to act as mentors to youth for guidance and support to learn basic work skills:** Mentorships establish positive role models and are important to supporting youth toward program completion. Mentorship programs are available through many community organizations in Colorado, including school districts, business and civic organizations, and community agencies. Youth Programs will connect with existing programs and establish new service strategies in this area based on the needs of eligible youth and options available in the community.

Each local WIB and the Youth Council may add program elements that would be beneficial to the population they serve to this list in their comprehensive Plan.

In order to identify effective providers, providers will be asked to:

- Describe prior experience working with disadvantaged youth
- Describe prior experience in operating employment and training and educational programs
- Provide previous program data to indicate past successes
- Demonstrate knowledge of community resources available
- Describe current or proposed linkages with community organizations, state agencies, employers, etc.
- Provide letters of support and/or MOU's.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the business community.

Workforce center partner programs and other youth programs in the local area should be available for applicants who do meet the WIA Title I youth program eligibility requirements but can't be served due to lack of resources. Local boards and their Youth Councils will provide to as many WIA Title I eligible youth as possible based on resources.

Youth providers will be recommended by the local region's Youth Council to the full WIB. In making program and funding recommendations, local Youth Councils will take into account the proposed operator's past success, training designs, cost effectiveness, relationships with the business community, relationships with local service networks, and ability to offer skills certified by the business community. Operators must also demonstrate financial capability and attest to compliance with all applicable laws.

Coordination with Job Corps

A memorandum of understanding will be developed with Job Corps Centers and all Colorado Workforce Centers. The MOU will detail the interaction between the One-Stop Center(s) and Job Corps focusing on sharing information, referrals, and providing services to eligible youth. Local WIBs serving areas where Job Corps centers are located must include a Job Corps representative on the Youth Council. Local WIBs where Job Corps centers are not located are encouraged to invite Job Corps representatives to serve on the Youth Council. Workforce center staff will work with Job Corps business and community liaisons to coordinate services in accordance with Section 153 of the Workforce Investment Act.

Coordination with Youth Opportunity Grants

Currently in Colorado, most regions have enterprise communities and/or enterprise zones and are eligible to submit proposals for Youth Opportunity Grants. Under WIA, the governor is authorized to designate additional communities to be eligible for Youth Opportunity Grants. Regional Workforce Boards in eligible empowerment zones, enterprise communities, and high poverty areas as designated by the governor will administer youth opportunity grants. This will ensure that services at the local level are comprehensive and the services are coordinated with all state and local agencies offering youth services. The State will provide guidance, technical assistance, and economic data to local WIBs and their Youth Councils for the preparation of proposals for Youth Opportunity Grants.

Colorado Youth Strategies

Colorado has developed several strategies to help guide local WIBs and the Youth Councils:

- The workforce development system will be the driving force for the Workforce Investment Act. Each region shall have at least one One-Stop Center located in their region at the time of implementation. The Colorado One-Stop system offers the necessary link between academic and occupational learning and connections to the job market and employers.
- Colorado strongly encourages local Youth Councils to review local education and workforce linkages and to consider knowledgeable business people and community leaders for membership.
- Year-round youth activities should reflect designs that have shown effectiveness in preparing youth for the workforce.
- Youth Councils are strongly encouraged to promote business representation on the council and to promote partnerships with community businesses. In order to develop a partnership between the private business community and the Youth Councils, a positive, proactive approach will be required.
- WIBs and the Youth Councils are encouraged to partner with other grantees and services providers eligible to receive funds through such programs as Adult Literacy, Welfare to Work, Wagner-Peyser, Carl Perkins, and other federal, state, and labor education grants.
- Local One-Stops should be able to provide comprehensive access to the Internet and through the Internet have opportunities for youth to access career information and training and employment information. Colorado has set up a web page designed to link participants with local areas and all youth information available.
- Local WIBs are encouraged to set up individual assessments of out-of-school youth in order to determine if they can participate in youth programs, adult programs, or both.
- Youth Councils will develop a design framework that provides objective assessments of academic and occupational skill levels of participating youth, individual service strategies that reflect assessment and identify career goals, preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities, linkages between academic and occupational learning, and connections to employers and job markets.

The State of Colorado strongly encourages all local workforce investment boards to form the strongest possible Youth Councils possible. Youth Councils are vital to the success of WIA and vital to the future workforce of the State.

